

New Voices in Higher Education Research and Scholarship

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Filipa M. Ribeiro, Yurgos Politis, and Bojana Culum

New Voices in Higher Education Research and Scholarship

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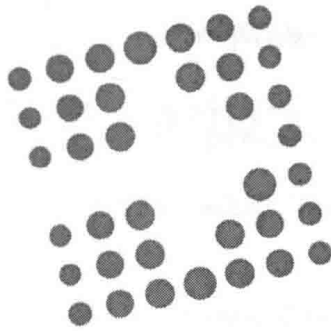
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Dedication

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Foreword

The core of papers published in this book arose through the opportunity for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to network and collaborate at an ECR colloquium held in Ireland in 2013 and through the Early Career Higher Education Research (ECHER) network, established in 2011. Networks such as this are valuable in providing a forum for ECRs to exchange information, interact, and engage. This level of peer support is essential, as many ECRs have reported a sense of being isolated in their work; therefore, building networks is critical in enabling ECRs to develop strong ties with peers and develop extended support networks above and beyond those offered by supervisors or associated principal investigators. These networks also allow ECRs to build their scholarly profile and begin a process of developing an academic identity. The quality and breadth of the chapters in this book demonstrates the values of early career researchers in developing networks and building up a body of integrated knowledge in their chosen field; it is hoped that many of the authors in this book will continue to forge working relationships that they have developed as a consequence of this project through the continued formulation of future research grants and publications.

Most of the chapters in the book come from a consortium of authors early in their research careers. The fact that they are in the initial stages of their research careers does not negate the breadth and quality of papers that explore a wide range of issues related to research into higher education. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are those who are currently undertaking, or have completed, doctoral studies in the last five years and are an important part of research structures within higher education systems. Developing and supporting early career researchers is essential for the future development of disciplinary knowledge. In particular, in the field of research into higher education, ECRs are crucially important to the development of understanding of, and identifying solutions to, the challenges facing higher education systems both nationally and globally. They are also a key component of, and contributor to, the development of higher education systems. In addition, they provide the foundation for the future workforce in all aspects of higher education including teaching, research, policy, and governance in both the public and private sectors.

Although the importance of ECRs to the higher education sector is without question, their voice has not always been heard, and in many cases, their expertise and experience is underutilised. There is also evidence that ECRs are dissatisfied with aspects of their careers, especially in terms of opportunities to take on leadership roles and in accessing forums to highlight and disseminate their work (Åkerlind, 2005; Petersen, 2011). It is important that ECRs are provided with opportunities to publish and present their research findings; projects, such as this book, are imperative in not only allowing ECRs to present their work but also to provide them with an opportunity to publish independently and display their knowledge to a wide audience on their area of study.

Foreword

In addition, the involvement of ECRs from a variety of disciplines in bringing together the chapters in this book adds scope and innovation in exploring the challenges that face higher education. Bringing together ECRs from different disciplines provides a fresh perspective on higher education research that may not be evident in previously published research. The quality of research in the future is based on the development of skilled researchers who can work together in multidisciplinary teams in advancing knowledge in the field of higher education.

The papers presented in this volume demonstrate how the research undertaken by ECRs can develop new perspectives on higher education research as well as progressing an understanding of areas previously unexplored. In this book, the authors have tackled a diverse range of contemporary challenges facing higher education, including the impact on higher education of information and communications technology, managerial control, academic autonomy, professional development of teachers and academics, the experiences of minority groups in society accessing higher education, non-traditional aged students, internationalisation in higher education, comparative research in higher education, methodology, and doctoral supervision. As well as contributing debate and research on the traditional functions of universities (teaching and research), the authors provide a welcome exploration of new innovations in higher education, not least in the areas of knowledge transfer and the relationships between higher education and industry. The increasing collaborative nature of research into higher education and the enthusiasm of early career researchers in this regard are evident in that the book presents papers by authors from Australia, Chile, Croatia, France, Ireland, Mongolia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the USA. This international interaction and collaboration is to be welcomed as not only does it facilitate understanding of higher education within a global context, but it also allows for cross-national sharing of ideas and methodological innovations. In addition, early career researchers who authored the chapters in this book are using innovative and multiple methods to investigate areas of interest in higher education research. In this book you will find methods, such as case studies, documentary analysis, reflective students' papers, social network analysis, techno-biographies, testimonials, secondary data analysis, and action research, among others, used. All of which push out the boundaries in enhancing our understanding of higher education systems and the actors that work within these systems.

The challenges for ECRs in higher education both in entering the system and progressing careers are well documented; this book demonstrates the value that ECRs can bring to the field and how the future of research into higher education is in safe hands. This is not least down to the editors of the book, all early career researchers themselves, who have shown exemplary leadership skills in bringing together this fine volume of work that will be of interest to all those who work in or research the field of higher education.

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Jonathan Drennan is Professor of Healthcare Research at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton. He holds a PhD and Master's degree in Education from University College Dublin, a postgraduate diploma in Statistics from Trinity College Dublin, and a bachelor's degree in Nursing from the University of Ulster. He has published a number of papers on higher education in leading international journals, including *Studies in Higher Education*, *Nurse Education Today*, *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, and *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. He has also published chapters on engaging university students and the research function of the academic profession in Europe. His specialization is on the impact and outcomes of the Master's degree for health professionals. He has extensive experience in large-scale research projects, having

worked as principal investigator and co-applicant on a number of nationally and internationally funded studies. He was the principal investigator in a European Science Foundation/Irish Research Council for the Social Sciences-funded programme of research entitled *The Academic Profession in Europe: Responses to Societal Change (EUROAC)*. He also chaired the survey design group, which developed and tested the Irish National Student Survey – a measure of student engagement that is being used throughout the higher education sector in Ireland.

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Preface

It has been our belief, for a long time, that *we are what we study*. But how does what we study affect us? Can research on higher education really matter? And how does it matter? The way this book came to exist and the contributions of each author testify the importance of engagement with our own research in our lives. Some reported the way higher education turned out to be a crucial and formative field in a disconcerting and changing society. Others chose to stand up for higher education as a transformative tool of society, underlining both its political and innovative value. All of them, and us as editors, educators, or scholars of education, have shown that higher education *does* matter – it can change the world, at least by changing our *personal* worlds every day.

But if there is a place for higher education research in the 21st century, what kind of place is it, and where are we to find it? This was the underlying concern of a colloquium, Higher Education and Society: Implications and Effects, organized by the editors of this book and funded by the European Science Foundation in April 2013, University College Dublin. Some of the contributors to this book were speakers at the event. Later, that event turned out to be the kick off for this publication, as both initiatives meant to provide a voice to early career researchers in dialogue with more experienced scholars. The purpose was to create a debate on the implications and effects of higher education on society. And we are happy to present valuable voices from such different locations as Australia, Chile, Croatia, France, Ireland, Mongolia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the USA.

This book not only presents new voices of higher education research; it also aims at mapping contemporary challenges in the field. Thus, the 15 chapters focus on different aspects of higher education: (1) the changing pattern of decision-making in HE, (2) labour market issues, (3) knowledge acquisition and creation in HE, (4) life-long learning, (5) globalisation and internationalisation issues in HE, (6) challenging university teachers' competencies levels, (7) modernising the university, (8) university programme reviews, (9) access to HE by under-represented groups, and (10) multi-disciplinary research in HE. The variety of themes clearly shows that from each of them arises a different discourse. The themes vary from the role and *praxis* of higher education to the several dimensions that stress the dynamic and changeable nature of higher education and of the research carried on it.

In the first chapter, titled “Citius, Altius, Fortius: Mobilising the University for the ‘Europe of Knowledge,’” author Rómulo Pinheiro discusses contemporary trends in European higher education policy regarding the debate of university-industry relations and the debate on research excellence. The author does so under the label of the “logic of instrumentality,” based on the work by Johan P. Olsen and others. Drawing on data from ongoing national reforms across 17 European Union countries, the analysis discusses the impact of a number of key strategic measures undertaken by policymakers to tackle the excellence-relevance problematic, such as the proliferation of “centres of excellence,” the discourse

on world rankings, the convergence trends, and the strategic use of research collaboration in order to attain more competitive advantage. Based on these axes, the author suggests that there is a willingness by policymakers across Europe to set in motion a series of mechanisms geared towards supporting both *embedded excellence* (national and supranational efforts towards capitalising on the presence of scientific institutions as regeneration agents and economic catalysts) and *contextual relevance* (mainly related with the dominant emphasis on the role of applied [mode-2] knowledge and innovation in the economic regeneration/growth of localities and regions).

Using case studies, in the second chapter, titled “Strategic Management of Academic Human Resources: A Comparative Analysis of Flagship Universities in Norway, Finland, Switzerland, and Austria,” the author, Tatiana Fumasoli, discusses how change has been taking place in personnel policies of four European Flagship universities (University of Oslo, University of Helsinki, University of Basel, University of Vienna), bearing in mind relevant differences between national higher education systems. The author’s work has shown that regulatory frameworks (enhancing institutional autonomy), structural conditions (financial resources and students), and actors’ identities (academic profession, disciplinary fields, leadership, administration) shape the trajectories of universities and disciplines. In addition, the author discusses three analytical dimensions that emerged from presented comparative analysis that characterize how universities adapt to changing environmental conditions and leadership strategies: uncertainty, identity, and flexibility. Central in this chapter is to understand how universities adapt to pressures for change and develop their strategic management of human resources: how do policy reforms, university strategies, and academic traditions play the role of drivers of change?

The third chapter, titled “Funds of Knowledge and Epistemic Authority in Higher Education,” authored by one of the book’s editors, Filipa M. Ribeiro and by Miranda Lubbers, focuses on showing how the approach of funds of knowledge can be operationalised by Social Network Analysis (SNA) to investigate epistemic authority and epistemic change in knowledge creation processes in HE. Grounded on authors like Bourdieu, specifically his emphasis on situations of emergent knowledge, the author proposes to extend Bourdieu’s concerns to higher education studies, addressing the following questions, What topics seem to occupy hallowed ground? What topics are those to which we consistently turn a blind eye? and What does this say about the era in which we live? The author, then, discusses and describes how the conceptual framework of the theory of funds of knowledge and the methodological frameworks of SNA fits to address those questions and discusses the challenges of researching the relationship between knowledge networks (namely at the interpersonal level) and epistemic authority in HEIs.

In the fourth chapter, titled “A Need for New Methodological Approaches in Comparative Higher Education Research Projects?,” the author, Kristin Lofthus Hope, aims to contribute to the academic discussion on how international comparative and collaborative projects in higher education research conceptualize the use of methods, and how they practically deal with it. The author analyses the character of international comparative and collaborative research, which is multi-country (international collaborative) and often multidisciplinary and multi-method research. Thus, the question raised is if and how interdisciplinarity is established in international comparative higher education projects. The approach chosen was to ethnographically study one international comparative project regarding its choices and use of methods. The author concludes that in international comparative higher education research reflexivity is a highly important feature that needs to be enhanced.

The fifth chapter, titled “Quality of Doctoral Research Supervision: Contributions of an Integrative and Fluid Framework to Evaluate and Monitor the Process,” authored by Ana Vitoria Baptista, gives an outline of how quality assurance has evolved in Portugal by introducing different models of external

evaluations, including programme accreditation and institutional audits as well as examples of the use of national qualification frameworks and learning outcomes. Internal evaluations are described with examples of common practices—using the case of one Portuguese comprehensive university—such as the monitoring of doctoral candidates' progress. The chapter also contains considerations about the specificity of doctoral education in Portugal and the use of key performance indicators. The conclusion underlines the importance of three basic aspects in the attempt to design an evaluation and monitoring process for the quality of doctoral research supervision: 1) the existence of quality indicators depicted directly from student's and supervisor's reports in order to enhance the critical aspect of the evaluation mechanisms, 2) evaluation and quality should be raised from the institutional culture where they are embedded, 3) the existence of a supportive context to evaluation take place.

In the sixth chapter, titled "Technology Centres: An Extended Internal Labour Market for PhD Holders in Spain," the author, Susana Pablo-Hernando, provides an innovative study on the impact of PhD education and workforce on university-industry collaboration and institutional change of TCs. Based on a qualitative study, the author shows convincingly how Spanish TCs that collaborate a lot with HEI have adopted academic models of knowledge production, something that was absent in the research so far. Thus, the study contributes to closing this gap. Especially interesting is that the author shows how important and prestigious academic norms and knowledge production are even in hybrid spaces like TCs, where more applied projects and R&D activities are the principal task. This result bears important implications for PhD education in Spain, specifically for PhDs in hybrid spaces, as the chapter describes in the discussion section.

In the seventh chapter, titled "Higher Education and Globalization," authors Neus Lorenzo and Ray Gallon provide several case studies in order to illustrate the connectivist stance that the future of higher education should take, in their opinion. Issues like digital democracy, pedagogy of virtuality, and deliberative practices that shape globalization processes are discussed, taking into account the changing context of today's universities. The authors claim that tertiary education—and their chapter clearly justifies the use of the term "tertiary"—must "deeply integrate into the digitally connected universe, while preserving academic freedom and rigor." How? By focusing on three main innovation orientations: resources (e-learning, massive platforms for MOOCs), processes (in-service professional training), and transformational research oriented to a collective good. In line with researchers like Thomas Pfeffer, Lorenzo and Gallon stress that the solution to tackle the vast array of technical innovations and of challenges associated with the distribution of digital media is to engage with well-known collaborative schemas to overcome the "certifying knowledge acquisition" paradigm and promote a shift to "benchmarking learning processes."

The eighth chapter, titled "Tracing the Use of Communication Technologies in Higher Education," authored by Fernando Ramos and a team of his colleagues, presents a comprehensive view of the main activities and findings of a research project titled TRACER-Portuguese Public Higher Education Use of Communication Technologies, which focused on how information about the use of Communication Technologies in Higher Education Institutions can be collected, systematized, processed, and deployed to stakeholders. The project was carried out between 2011 and 2014, and its main results are a consolidated proposal of an analysis model to address the use of Communication Technologies in Higher Education institutions, as well as the U-TRACER[®] tool. This Web-based tool provides support to the process of collecting, processing, and deploying data related with the use of Communication Technologies in a specific Higher Education or in a group of institutions, based on institutional or geographical criteria.

In the ninth chapter, titled “University Teachers’ Use of Digital Technologies: The Realities from Mongolia and Chile,” authors Daariimaa Marav and Michelle Espinoza explore the realities, opportunities, and challenges that academic staff face when using digital technologies through the perspectives offered by the field of digital literacy studies. The findings illustrate the close and complex relationships between sociocultural contexts, beliefs, values, and digital literacy practices. The study suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the wider contexts affecting the digital practices around teaching and learning rather than to technologies *per se*. The chapter aims to compare how wider sociopolitical factors are represented in techno-biographies of university teachers from these developing countries and to discuss opportunities and challenges that they encounter in using digital technologies in their everyday lives.

In the tenth chapter, titled “Contributing to an Evidence Base for the Enhancement of the Experiences and Outcomes of Mature Students at an Irish University,” authors Emma Murphy, Yurgos Politis (one of the editors), and Maria Slowey explore current patterns of participation and progression by mature students in programmes across an Irish University (IUX), as the proportion of full-time mature entrants to Irish higher education institutions has actually declined in recent years. This chapter reports on a small scale, qualitative exercise. Nevertheless, the consultation with this particular group of mature students delivered an interesting list of conclusions. The students found activity-based learning sessions valuable and suggested the time allocated to them at induction should be expanded; their decision-making processes are quite different from those of school leavers because they do not enter higher education as a cohort; they felt that some of their needs and preferences with regards to the social and, in certain respects, educational activities were not met. Based on the suggestions and experiences of students and staff, and informed by good practice examples from literature, a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the experiences and successful outcomes of IUX mature students in the future are proposed.

The authors of the eleventh chapter, titled “Roma Social Inclusion through Higher Education Policies in Romania,” Delia Bîrle and her colleagues, discuss whether the educational policies that were introduced by the Romanian Government during the last 15 – 20 years are suitable examples of good practices for other European countries that are facing the issue of Roma integration. Their study included Roma students within the University of Oradea in Romania by examining their attitudes towards academic learning, motivational factors, academic self-efficacy, faced difficulties, and potential solutions to achieve higher rates of student-retention during the years of academic training. In attempting to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the role and impact of educational policies that targeted Roma integration in Romania, as well as the possible challenges and difficulties encountered, the authors present data from interviews conducted with several decision makers, representatives of the academic staff, representatives of NGOs, and current and former Roma students.

Using (international) students’ reflective papers and managing the large quantity of narrative data received from those papers, the authors of the twelfth chapter, titled “International Student Perceptions of Ethics in a Business Pathway Program,” Donna M. Velliariis, Craig R. Willis, and Janine M. Pierce, examine the EIBT (Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology, Australia) international students’ own perceptions of “ethics.” The findings reveal students’ understanding(s) of their own ethical sensitivity and, hence, behaviour and are particularly relevant to contemporary debates surrounding how to improve educational attainment and ethical standards, given the emerging importance of partner providers amidst rising numbers of international students seeking HE in Australia and abroad. While it is not explored in great detail in this chapter, “culture” is implicit in this discussion because of the way in which international students are required to negotiate meaning through interactions within the

sociocultural environment, which in this case is the Australian HE context. Their findings reveal how the vast majority of students referred to their current studies as having opened their eyes to issues surrounding ethical behaviour(s) and/or academic integrity.

In the thirteenth chapter, titled “Does Accredited Professional Development for Academics Improve Teaching and Learning in Higher Education?,” the author, Claire McAvinia, and her colleagues focus on evaluation and impact of accredited courses within the academic professional development centers. Since the early 1990s, academic professional development has emerged as a formal activity in most third-level institutions in the UK, Ireland, Australasia, and the US. This trend led to the inception of centres for academic development. Given the range of staff attending, the longevity of the programmes, and the many challenges now facing higher education, the authors sought to re-examine their own provision and to evaluate the impact of accredited courses over some years. The authors are part of a team delivering accredited programmes in teaching at tertiary level, and have collaborated to examine the impact of their work and that of the team over more than ten years in this area. Findings from both the literature and most recent research within their own institution indicate a range of benefits for higher education in providing and supporting accredited programmes for educators. However, they have also identified methodological issues in measuring these benefits and the overall impact.

In the fourteenth chapter, titled “Case Study of a Hybrid Undergraduate Elementary Certification Program,” the author, Carmen Popa, and her colleagues present and discuss the only hybrid program developed for preschool and primary certification at the University of Oradea in Romania. The preschool and primary weekend education program at the University of Oradea was developed to work with students who for various reasons cannot attend the traditional day classes. The target groups for this study were the student body of the weekend program and its instructors. Most students work during the day and many have family commitments beyond those of traditional students. One-third of them are already working as teachers and are attending university to earn their bachelor’s degree. All instructors in the program are full-time professors at the university. In 2011, the weekend program was changed into a hybrid program in an effort to meet more directly the needs of the student population. The program prepares students to become certified preschool and primary teachers. During the past three years, it has become apparent to the instructors and leadership that the students have different needs than those of the traditional day students. In order to more effectively meet their needs, it became obvious that the pedagogy and structure of the program needed refinement. The data gathered in this study allowed the research team to develop recommendations for program, pedagogical, and textbook improvements.

The authors of the last, fifteenth, chapter, titled “Contemporary Challenges and Preschool Teachers’ Education in Croatia: The Evaluation of the New Study Program Early/Preschool Care and Education at Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka,” Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić, Lidija Vujičić, and Željko Boneta, present results of the evaluation of the graduate study program Early and Preschool Care and Education (EPCE) at the University of Rijeka, which is the first of that kind in Croatia. The salient point of the evaluation was to analyze its usefulness according to preschool teachers’ actual job demands in Croatia. Forty-four preschool teachers and graduate students were asked to identify the level of their motivation for enrolling in this particular study program as well as the level of (generic and specific) competencies developed during their graduate study. Their analysis revealed highly positive perception of relevant competences gained during this particular graduate study program as well as highly intrinsic motivation among students for enrolling in this graduate study program. Overall, the findings confirmed the importance of satisfying the professional needs of preschool teachers.

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